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THE BULLETIN

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

March 1993

Vol. 46 No. 7



University of Illinois
Graduate School of Library and Information Science

University of Illinois Press

**"An outstanding contribution to
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THE ANIMALS

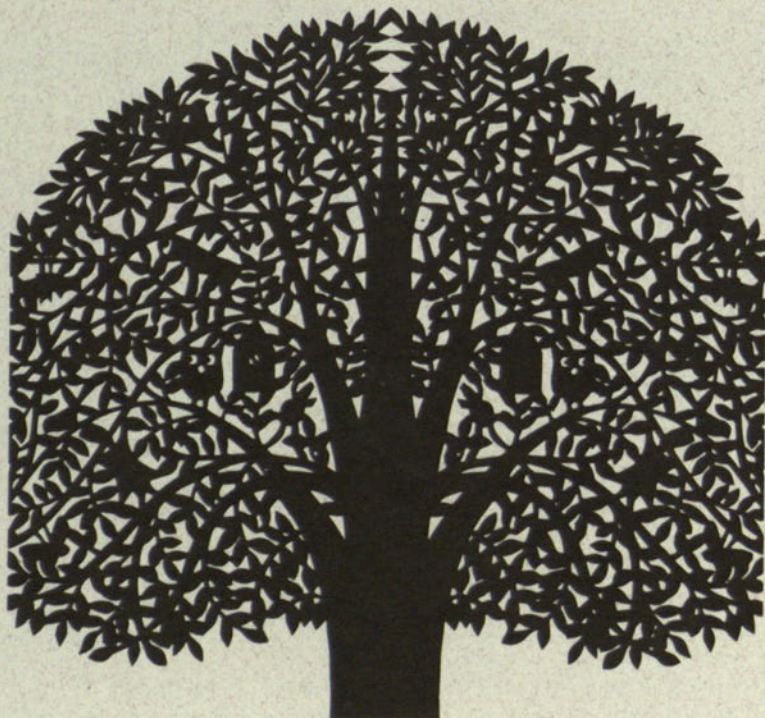
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TRANSLATED BY THE EMPRESS MICHIKO OF JAPAN
DECORATIONS IN TWO COLORS BY MITSUMASA ANNO

"A first appearance in English for Michio Mado, Japan's 1990 nominee for the Andersen Award. The translator — Japan's Empress — has selected 20 of his brief, delicately phrased poems for this handsome bilingual edition, each page adorned with the same decorative cut-paper frieze of stylized animals by Japan's most renowned illustrator." —*Kirkus Reviews*

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T H E B U L L E T I N

OF THE CENTER FOR CHILDREN'S BOOKS

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EXPLANATION OF CODE SYMBOLS USED WITH REVIEWS

*	Asterisks denote books of special distinction.
R	Recommended.
Ad	Additional book of acceptable quality for collections needing more material in the area.
M	Marginal book that is so slight in content or has so many weaknesses in style or format that it should be given careful consideration before purchase.
NR	Not recommended.
SpC	Subject matter or treatment will tend to limit the book to specialized collections.
SpR	A book that will have appeal for the unusual reader only. Recommended for the special few who will read it.

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THE BIG PICTURE

Living in Secret

by Cristina Salat

The "problem novel" is a genre in disrepute these days; the term summons up images of lurid storylines, car crashes, and excessive amounts of info-preaching by the author, often in the guise of a teacher, a twelve-step sponsor, or a pamphlet the characters happen to find lying around in the cafeteria. Although usually dismissed by reviewers as "didactic," these books remain popular with young adolescents, who may bear with the message for the sake of the melodrama.

"In the middle of the night my mother comes to steal me away," begins Cristina Salat's *Living in Secret*, and that's plenty of drama right there; heck, it's the whole booktalk. Amelia's mother, with her daughter's complicity, is taking Amelia away from her father to live in San Francisco with Mom and her lover Janey—Mom's lesbianism is the reason she lost custody of Amelia in the divorce. The "kidnapping" is tense and complicated. Janey and Amelia, in wigs and with new names, will fly from New York to San Francisco and settle in while Mom waits and berates her ex-husband for letting Amelia "run away"; later she will quit her job on the pretext of looking for Amelia and join her and Janey in a new life.

Amelia, eleven but pretending to be twelve, finds herself in a situation hemmed with secrets. She has to change her name to Julie, she frosts her hair, she can't go to school because of the required paperwork (a tutor is found), Janey insists she keep her whole past a secret from her new best friend Elizabeth, who is black and at first suspects that "Julie" is secretive because she's prejudiced. When Mom arrives, Amelia has to pretend that her mother and her mother's lover are sisters. While writ *in extremis*, these evoke the more ordinary secrets every child keeps, and it's this bond with the child reader, forged through Salat's firm focus on Amelia's feelings and perceptions, that will gain the book its necessary empathy. Certainly, the novel wants young readers to understand that lesbians and gay men make good parents and that judging people on the basis of their sexual orientation is wrong and hurtful, but it makes these points through Amelia's authentic and immediate present-tense narration. She fights with Janey, who, instead of being Ms. Lesbian Role Model, fights back: "I left my home and my business, and moved across country so that you could be with your mother. Does that mean anything to you?" Amelia gets mad at her mother, resentful at the toll secret-keeping takes on her friendship with Elizabeth, who has problems with her own parents: "my mother doesn't get it. I don't want to be white. I just want to do fun things with my hair."

In the end, Amelia is found by her father, which is really no surprise, given that the kidnapping scheme was at best naïve and at worst self-centered on the part of Mom and Janey, and while it's clear that novelist and narrator prefer Mom, Dad isn't a monster so much as he is small-mindedly oblivious. It looks like Amelia may just have to tough things out until she turns eighteen, a lesson that lacks the neatly edifying wrap-up of many problem novels. What Salat's book has in common with the best of the genre is its allegiance to story first and sermon second, the lessons of the latter served by strict attention to the former.

Roger Sutton, *Executive Editor*



NEW BOOKS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

ADLER, DAVID A. *A Picture Book of Anne Frank*; illus. by Karen Ritz. Holiday House, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-8234-1003-X \$14.95 R 6-9 yrs

As Holocaust history enters elementary school curricula for younger age groups, teachers and librarians are faced with the formidable task of finding titles that present a complex, horrifying subject for primary graders' listening or independent reading. Adler's picture book biography presents one excellent solution (Isabella Leitner's *The Big Lie*, BCCB 1/93, is another) as he describes, with simple dignity, the life and death of Anne Frank. The challenge seems to have brought out the best in both writer and illustrator: Adler's text is less choppy and more cohesive than in some of his other volumes in this series, and Ritz' watercolors, though obviously based on photographs, avoid the stiff effect that often results from artists' copying photos. The story itself is, of course, inherently dramatic, with suspense and tragedy that cannot fail to touch children and broaden their empathy. An author's note and a list of important dates are appended. BH

BAUMANN, KURT *The Hungry One*; tr. and ad. by Naomi Lewis; illus. by Stasys Eidrigevicius. North-South, 1993 26p
Library ed. ISBN 1-55858-196-0 \$14.88
Trade ed. ISBN 1-55858-121-9 \$14.95 R 6-9 yrs

"Strange is the tale of Rum Tum Tum." Indeed—Rum Tum Tum is an ever hungry omnivore, devouring food, fields, and forests in a quest to fill up his eternal emptiness. When he asks for the hand (in marriage) of the miller's daughter, he is refused but bides his time for seven years and then returns for his revenge: he eats the miller's daughter, the miller, and the jail cell in which he is imprisoned. Naomi Lewis' adaptation of Baumann's poem has a chanting creepiness that recalls Dr. Fell and some of the other darker Mother Goose: "Now I shall eat her; she'll be mine./ And then on you yourself I'll dine./ Don't plead. Don't pray. 'Twill soon be done./ For I am still the Hungry One." As he did for Ramachandar's equally strange *Little Pig* (BCCB 11/92), illustrator Eidrigevicius places phantasmagoric

mask-paintings upon human shoulders for a gallery of moody photographs. Text and photographs together provide an elegant read-aloud horror story, one that leaves plenty of room for the imagination to play—unlike Cindy Sherman's lurid version of Grimm's *Fitcher's Bird*, reviewed below. RS

BERRY, JAMES *The Future-Telling Lady and Other Stories*. Perlman/HarperCollins, 1993 140p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021435-X \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021434-1 \$14.00

Ad Gr. 5-7

These six Caribbean-set tales include a variety of characters: Sherena, who encounters "white-people ghosts" from a 1692 plantation; Yuuni, who tries to use magic to make her younger brother disappear; Boy-Don, who is overwhelmed with homesickness after only a few hours of a supposedly week-long visit with Granny-May; Son-Son, stymied by a mule that will not obey him on his first big job; Mother Eesha, who heals children of their emotional problems; and Mrs. Hen, the victim of a political folk allegory in which Mr. Mongoose gets away with murder. In the medium of contemporary short stories for younger children, Berry does not seem as commanding as he has been in folklore (*Spiderman Anancy*, BCCB 12/89) and historical fiction (*Ajeemah and his Son*, 11/92). The flashes of vivid development are sometimes accompanied by unnecessary explanation ("It hurt him that Maroontugger didn't take him as a friend. 'How can he not take me as a friend?' he whispered") and the quality of the collection is uneven, the title story being weakened by switches in point of view and the last story presenting a jarring contrast of tone. When Berry is at his best, however, the voices are pure and strong, skillfully playing with ambiguity in a sibling relationship or with a child's ambivalence about juggling responsibilities and privileges in the business of growing up. BH

BIBLE *The Story of the Creation*; ISBN 0-525-44946-9; Spanish ed. *La Historia de la Creación*, ISBN 0-525-45055-6. Each book: illus. by Jane Ray. Dutton, 1993 [25p] \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R 6-9 yrs

Ray's interpretation of the first seven days is, like her previous books *Noah's Ark* (BCCB 11/90) and *The Story of Christmas* (11/91), an elegant collage of birds and beasts, sun and moon and seasons, the images imaginatively placed about the pages in a variety of friezes, vignettes and muralistic double spreads that culminate in a Garden bursting with life. The colored-pencil and watercolor art is well-drawn and subtly hued, tastefully accented with gold paint. Although more strictly decorative than the previous books (each of which had more of a story to work with), this is still an attractive, often exuberant frame for the sonorous King James text. RS

BLACKMAN, MALORIE *Girl Wonder and the Terrific Twins*; illus. by Lis Toft. Dutton, 1993 72p

ISBN 0-525-45065-3 \$12.99

Ad Gr. 2-4

Most newly independent readers should enjoy the antic doings of a young black girl named Maxine (Girl Wonder) and her little brothers (the Super Twins) as they execute various schemes that invariably go wrong. The disaster humor is

fatuous and repetitive, but the episodes (involving a swimming pool, a cat in a tree, wet paint) have lots of dialogue, slapstick pratfalls, and primary appeal. RS

BROWN, PAULA *Moon Jump: A Countdown*; written and illus. by Paula Brown. Viking, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-670-84237-0 \$13.50

Ad 3-6 yrs

The ten cows and one steer (presumably) are drawn with cartoon-like humor in this take-off of the familiar nursery rhyme line "the cow jumped over the moon." Angus Le Boeuf is the Master of Ceremonies who introduces every cow before she attempts her jump. Each one, dressed in a modest aerialist costume and tights, uses a different ingenious method to try to get over the moon—a high-rise trapeze, a power-spring pogo stick, a *motorcycle*. Anything that could be a vague play-on-words regarding cows is emphasized in boldface, in case the reader should somehow miss it. The *countdown* idea is clever and the cows are funny, but there is one big design problem in this book—on every double spread there is a drawing of a stable where the remaining cows wait to take their jumps, and the cow who is jumping on those pages watches herself from the stable as she is jumping. For example, the spread labeled "3 Cows Waiting to Jump Over the Moon" shows the third cow waiting to jump and making her attempt at the same time. Try explaining that to your lap audience. The text is in verse form, sometimes witty, but always interrupted by "There she goes . . . Oh, no! She missed" before the rhyme scheme is picked up again. Slight but amooosing. KJ

BROWNE, ANTHONY *Zoo*; written and illus. by Anthony Browne. Knopf, 1993 26p

Library ed. ISBN 0-679-93946-6 \$15.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-679-83946-1 \$15.00

Ad 6-9 yrs

Has this sly artist gone existential or just lost his sense of humor? The voice here is a child's, but the viewpoint is very grownup as a family trip to the zoo turns into a sequence of traffic jams, sibling bickering, and Dad's stupid jokes at the sight of animals caged in sterile environments. The kids prefer burgers, fries, and monkey hats. "I don't think the zoo really is for animals," says Mum sadly. "I think it's for people." Of course, the story serves as a showcase for Browne's witty graphics featuring humans' acquiring animal features to suit their behavioral characteristics (see *Gorilla*, BCCB 11/85, and *Piggybook*, BCCB 11/86). The ubiquitous bars that set the animals off in poignant isolation and shadow the humans, as well, are as effective here as they were in *Hansel and Gretel*. But the ending of *Zoo* seems intrusively geared to launch a discussion among preschool consciousness-raising groups: "That night I had a very strange dream," says the narrator from his cage. "Do you think animals have dreams?" Kids are more likely to absorb the message through a strong story that establishes kinship with animals than through a didactic fable. BH

CALABRO, MARIAN *Zap! A Brief History of Television*. Four Winds, 1992 206p illus. with photographs

ISBN 0-02-716242-7 \$15.95

R Gr. 5-9

Television is a fascinating topic and its history is full of cultural milestones and footnotes: Calabro offers a competent survey of the subject. After outlining the technological start of television, the book addresses genres of programming, with

chapters on comedy, drama, daytime shows, sports, and news; it then discusses advertising, cable and public television, and some arguments against the medium and predictions for its future. Many of the shows discussed will probably be less familiar to young readers than Calabro seems to imagine, but the survey is impressively broad. Although the writing is sometimes awkward ("Kovacs . . . bounced from network to network before dying young"), some important statements are made plainly ("Viewers pay for television by buying what is advertised on it") and enlivening trivia is included ("Because the moon has no wind, the American flag planted there had been preripped and made rigid for a good picture"). Viewers looking for new juice on their favorite soap or sitcom will be disappointed, but they'll come away with a better understanding of how it got on the air and what they're participating in by watching it. Three appendices (listing Emmy winners, top-rated programs, and network addresses), a bibliography and reading list, and an index are included; black-and-white photos, primarily scenes from programs, appear throughout. DS

CAREY, VALERIE SCHO *Tsugele's Broom*; illus. by Dirk Zimmer. Geringer/HarperCollins, 1993 32p
Library ed. ISBN 0-06-020987-9 \$14.89
Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-020986-0 \$15.00
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 2-4

Tsugele, an independent young woman who "washed the family's clothes, fed the chickens, swept the floor, baked the challah, and did the shopping," has every qualification to become a wife. But no one passes her tests; she wants a man "as reliable as my broom"—it sweeps floors, chases cats, beats rugs, and cleans ashes, and it is the broom who becomes Tsugele's husband, after a magical transformation. Because this original tale begins with so many folktale elements, it surprises listeners expecting Tsugele to find her husband the formulaic way, by meeting a man whose logic and common sense serve to prove he is more valuable than a broom-groom. Zimmer's illustrations, bordered with an intricate print, have sharp color contrasts and humorous characters, whose foxy features reveal foolish expressions. Carey's story is a kissing cousin to Van Allsburg's *The Widow's Broom* (BCCB 10/92), in which the relationship between Widow Shaw and her broom is more complex and secretive than the relationship between Tsugele and her broom. Yet both books celebrate a strong heroine who defies tradition with satisfying results. KJ

CHOCOLATE, DEBBI *NEATE™ to the Rescue!* Just Us Books, 1992 90p
Paper ed. ISBN 0-940975-42-4 \$3.95 Ad Gr. 4-7

Followers of Chicago politics should recognize the events that form the springboard for this story: Feisty, black, be-hatted Chicago councilwoman Shannon Gordon is threatened with a special election resulting from the fact that her ward (at the impetus of a slimy white opponent) has been redistricted to include some white suburbs. Gordon's daughter, Naimah, herself a candidate for office at DuSable Junior High School, is determined to get her mother reelected and enlists her friends to help. It's good to see a school-teen series with an African-American cast (see also Stacie Johnson's *Sort of Sisters*, BCCB 9/92); it's also good to see series teens involved in political action. But like most series, the characterization is stock and the plotting too easy: Naimah's mother is reelected handily, and Naimah is

elected class president after her brilliant speech ("vote for the best candidate—and not for the color of the candidate's skin") defeats the racially self-serving campaigns of her white and Latino opponents. The book is didactic but reader-flattering, and kids will also enjoy the predictable range of Naimah's friends, who, it appears, will each be highlighted in future volumes of the series. The paperback is digest-sized, with an engaging cover painting of the five friends. RS

COOPER, SUSAN *The Boggart*. McElderry, 1993 [208p]

ISBN 0-689-50576-0 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-7

The Boggart is an invisible, indestructible Celtic mischief maker who becomes wary of attachment to those whom he is bound to outlive. When the last MacDevon clan chief dies and leaves his crumbling castle to his heirs, a Canadian family named Volnik, the Boggart gets trapped in a desk shipped from Scotland. His ancient presence in a modern world electrifies (literally) Emily and Jessup Volnik's lives until they finally figure out what he is and how to ship him back home in a computer game that could either save or lose him forever. Cooper's careful groundwork in establishing contrasted settings of a Scottish loch and a modern city, her sure quickstudies of the inhabitants, and her overlay of the mechanical and the emotional make this an absorbing but sharp departure from her more formal Dark Is Rising series. The scene in which the Boggart creates havoc and then art by manipulating the keyboard for lighting a Shakespeare play casts a real spell, while a psychiatrist's subscribing to the supernatural in "exorcising" Emily's "anger" (how else to account for the household chaos?) satirizes bogus magic, not to mention bogus publicity. Dr. Stigmore is a bit of contrived villainy that breaks tone with the rest of the book, but young readers steeped in Stephen King culture may, in fact, appreciate him as slapstick humor. Using both electronics and theater as metaphors for magic, Cooper has extended the world of high fantasy into contemporary children's lives through scenes superimposing the ordinary and the extraordinary; children will return the compliment by considering anew the possibilities of both. BH

DICKINSON, PETER *A Bone from a Dry Sea*. Delacorte, 1993 [208p]

ISBN 0-385-30821-3 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

Two girls, two tribes, separated by millions of years, together are used to explore the controversial evolutionary theories of Elaine Morgan, who believes that humans are descended from sea-apes (Dickinson cites her books in an afterword). Li is a sea-ape; Vinny (Lavinia) is a contemporary girl who has joined her father on an archeological dig in the Rift Valley. The social structures of both Li's tribe and the members of Vinny's dig are complex and ritualized, with the "rules" of the former allowing readers to appreciate the ironies of the latter. Dickinson is careful not to anthropomorphize Li ("we have to imagine them in words, but the tribe were only about halfway toward words"), and never allows theory to overwhelm story. Told in alternating chapters, Li's half of the story is more involving as her tribe, living by the sea and swimming from place to place, enjoys a profitable relationship with dolphins that is severed when earthquakes and an enormous tidal wave force the tribe inland and into a new way of living. Vinny's side of the story is focused on both archeological and family squabbling, and if the concerns sometimes seem a

little adult, Vinny's growing engagement with the revelations of the dig brings us closer to both protagonists. RS

DOHERTY, BERLIE *Snowy*; illus. by Keith Bowen. Dial, 1993. 32p
ISBN 0-8037-1343-6 \$14.00 R 5-8 yrs

Young audience members will conclude that Rachel is exceedingly fortunate: she and her family live "on a boat called a barge, on a waterway called a canal." And as if her colorful habitat (named Betelgeuse, referred to as Beetle Juice) weren't enough, Rachel has Snowy, their barge horse, who "lives in a barn on the banks of the canal, and his job is to pull Beetle Juice along the water when Rachel's mom and dad take people for rides." Pet Day at school brings some grief to Rachel; she can't take Snowy, who has to work, and her classmates seem dubious about his existence. Rachel's clever and kind teacher repairs the situation in style when the entire class heads down to Beetle Juice, meets Snowy, and gets a barge ride. The heady combination of boat and horse may surprise young listeners (and might serve as an introduction to canal transportation), but Doherty keeps the explanations simple while depicting her small protagonist with warmth and humor ("Rachel made her eyes big and round to show how much she wanted to take Snowy to school, but her mother wasn't looking"). The heavily textured pastel illustrations have an impressionistic flavor, employing light, shadow, and reflections on water for a cozy and romantic mood. While more detail of that child-appealing barge would have been welcome, Snowy is realistically depicted as an honest, steady plowhorse who's also a boon companion, nestling his pink nose comfortably on Rachel's shoulder. A gently exotic adventure with a barge like a swan and a loyal four-footed friend—this will seem like a dream-come-true to many young listeners. DS

EMBERLEY, ED *Go Away, Big Green Monster!*; written and illus. by Ed Emberley. Little, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-316-23653-5 \$12.95 R* 2-5 yrs

It's a bit like a do-it-yourself Wild Thing, with kids getting to perform Max's taming trick. This monster has "two big yellow eyes, a long blue nose, a big red mouth with sharp white teeth," and each turn of the page, through the use of die-cut overlays, reveals yet another scary feature, including squiggly ears, scraggly purple hair and a "big scary green face!" As with Sendak's *Wild Things*, it's impossible to know whether a particular child is going to be scared silly or highly amused by this monster; in either case, the second half of the book is devoted to a ritual banishment ("GO AWAY, big red mouth!") that removes each feature page by page: "and DON'T COME BACK! Until I say so." The shapes and features are bold and simple, with intense colors that provide some eye-popping contrasts. Braver children might even appreciate the book at bedtime, and after just a couple of readings by you, they will have the incantation memorized and will be able to make the monster come and go anytime they want to. RS

FARMER, PENELOPE *Thicker than Water*. Candlewick, 1993 [208p]
ISBN 1-56402-178-5 \$14.95
Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 6-9

Becky's already unhappy with her life: she's a plump adolescent, recently forced by family financial reversals to attend the local school, where she's teased for being

a private-school reject. Things are made more difficult when her hitherto-unknown cousin Will comes to stay with them after the death of his mother. Will is Becky's age but raised amid urban squalor; his ungrammatical and people-smart narration alternates chapter by chapter with Becky's more sheltered and petulant account. Will's mourning and adjustment is complicated by the strange experiences he keeps having: a sound of sobbing fills his room at night, and he begins to see a face at the window and hear cries of "Help me." With the reluctant aid of Becky and the more stable assistance of his quietly eccentric friend Zakky, Will determines that the ghost is the shade of a young boy who was killed a century ago while working in the nearby mine and who seeks a burial for his long-abandoned and ignored bones. This is a successful and worthy English ghost story (reminiscent of David Wiseman's *Jeremy Visick*, BCCB 10/81), with contemporary emotional resonances echoing those of the past (about feelings, lonely Will says "no one understood mine except that ghost, and no one understood his except me"), and traditional appurtenances—the sensitivity of animals to the supernatural, the refusal of the rational family to believe the true cause of disruption—are deftly woven into the story of familial disruption. Even the minor characters, such as Becky's school tormentors, are vivid and interesting, and the human dynamics are compelling all the way through the danger-filled climax. DS

FLEISCHMAN, PAUL *Bull Run*; illus. by David Frampton. Geringer/HarperCollins, 1993 104p

Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021447-3 \$13.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021446-5 \$14.00

Ad Gr. 5-7

In a sequence of sixty one- to two-page narratives, fifteen fictional characters (and one real general) recount their experiences during the Civil War. A few encounter each other, most meet unawares or not at all, but they have in common a battle, Bull Run, that affects—and sometimes ends—their lives. The writing is clean and the idea clear, but too many tracks muddy the water. Some individuals appear three times, some six, but the broad interspersed makes the identity of each difficult to remember and the development of various scenarios hard to follow. The advantage of such a large cast is, of course, the broadly represented range of society, from a bewildered general to a photographer who gets involved in the fighting to a slave determined to follow her freedom where it leads her. Students who perform the work on stage or as readers' theater, which is suggested in an endnote, will have the advantage of visual portrayals to help sort things out, and any reader will find an absorbing amount of information personalized in these all too brief accounts. BH

FOX, PAULA, ad. *Amzat and His Brothers: Three Italian Tales Remembered by Floriano Vecchi*; illus. by Emily Arnold McCully. Jackson/Orchard, 1993 [80p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08612-7 \$15.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05462-4 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R* Gr. 3-5

"No sooner had the tiny rooster led his friends into the house than he felt chicken feathers around his feet. 'I don't care for these feathers,' he said. 'They make me wonder where the chickens have gone.'" With sly humor and classic restraint, Fox styles a folktale reminiscent of "The Bremen Town Musicians"; here, five animal friends who've been savaged by a wolf find his house in the woods and get even. In

another tale, a variant of Joseph Jacobs' English folktale "Mr. Vinegar," a widow and her son, Cucol, collect a bag of gold abandoned by frightened thieves (like Mr. Vinegar, Cucol drops a door on their heads from a treetop) and best the villagers who have taunted them. Without violating folkloric compression, the author manages to personalize archetypes, as in her consideration of the widow's son: "Cucol was not backward, only very slow in reaching a conclusion, and as is true for most people, it was often the wrong one." Fox also respects the laws of folklore justice; when, in the trickster tale of the title, Amzar's two villainous brothers try to take away his humble inheritance, their punishment is cheerfully merciless. These three stories, illustrated with canny pen-and-ink hatch drawings, will make delicious fare for independent readers, but don't neglect to share the book aloud with younger listeners as well. After all, Fox heard them from Floriano Vecchi—whom she introduces in the preface as an Italian transplanted to New York City—and has passed them on in the belief that "stories do not disappear. They last longer than anything else." BH

GLEESON, BRIAN *Koi and the Kola Nuts*; illus. by Reynold Ruffins. Rabbit Ears, 1992 34p

ISBN 0-88708-281-5 \$14.95

Book/cassette combination ISBN 0-88708-282-3 \$19.95 Ad 5-8 yrs

The youngest son of a dead chief, Koi leaves the village where he has been cheated of his inheritance. On the way to finding a new home, he helps a snake, an ant, and an alligator, all of whom return the compliment when he's forced to pass three tests by cannibalistic strangers. This male Cinderella variant, styled easily in the present tense, has good pace and structure, but it raises a couple of questions that boil down to how politically correct it is to portray undesigned Africans eating each other, in what claims to be a folktale but has no cited sources. When, where, and by whom was the story originally collected or published? Did it really portray "a very large and fat woman" who keeps repeating, "I say cook him in the pot," or did the adaptors throw that in as a funny bite of suspense? We'll never know, because there's no way to track down the original. If you're comfortable with the details or comfortable with adapting them, this will make rhythmic reading aloud, and the graphics, while overdesigned by the insertion of icons punctuating the text, are warmly colored, jocular, and humorously drawn. BH

GREENE, CONSTANCE C. *Odds on Oliver*; illus. by S. D. Schindler. Viking, 1993 60p

ISBN 0-670-84549-3 \$12.99

M Gr. 3-5

Ever since Oliver was kicked out of nursery school (just the first of many silly plot contrivances), he has wanted to be a hero. Somehow, though, he keeps screwing up: a rescue of his drowning friend Arthur proves pointless when Arthur realizes he can touch bottom; Oliver's attempt to save the grocery checkout girl from an armed robber is foiled when she rescues him instead; when he tries to get Mrs. Murphy's cat out a tree, the fire department has to be called to get Oliver out of the tree instead. The reading is easy, but the story and writing are slapdash, and Green's attempts at humor will not amuse even those used to a steady Saturday morning TV diet: "Oliver and Arthur dropped everything and went fishing. Edna [Arthur's dog] went too. Edna liked to bark at the fish. Sometimes the fish barked back. Those were the dogfish." Heh-heh. RS

GRIMM, JAKOB LUDWIG KARL *Fitcher's Bird*; illus. with photographs by Cindy Sherman. Rizzoli, 1992 32p
ISBN 0-8478-1567-6 \$17.95

M 6-9 yrs

"Now this is a story for those who are not squeamish, for it is about a wicked wizard who liked to cut people up." Fair warning, but do the illustrations have to be so sensationalized? Sherman's photorealism in using dolls and doll parts has the effect of a horror movie such as *Child's Play*; thus her picture book seems to go beyond the unpredictable act of scaring children to a calculated effort to do so. Blood coagulates in the sticky beard around the villain's mouth, for instance, and terror reflects off the closeup of a maiden's plastic skin and glassy eyes. A grinning skull, along with the bloodshot eyes of the sweating Bluebeard character, will assure parents of nursing their preschoolers through nightmares, while older kids will get the wrong kind of kick out of this. If you're looking for redeeming social value, there's a smart heroine who puts all the dead ladies together again, sends them home, and traps Fitcher in his house, while her relatives lock the door and burn him to death. BH

HAMILTON, VIRGINIA *Many Thousand Gone: African Americans from Slavery to Freedom*; illus. by Leo and Diane Dillon. Knopf, 1993 152p
Library ed. ISBN 0-394-92873-3 \$16.99
Trade ed. ISBN 0-394-82873-9 \$16.00

R* Gr. 5-8

The real voice of history must be individual, and these thirty-some historical personalities give witness to slavery's toll on African-Americans. Each one speaks for thousands silenced. Hamilton shows her versatility here with an ambitious two-century story told in vignettes that never shortcut their subjects of complexity, however compressed the information. Part of her success derives from changing her rich, idiosyncratic fiction style into a straightforward prose that lets the facts speak louder than their presentation. This takes a lot of trust in the young audience and in the story itself, and Hamilton's faith is justified. From the "running away" of a slave named Somerset in 1671 to a South Carolina slave's celebration of the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, these moving episodes run the gauntlet of tragedy, comedy, nobility, and trickery as each slave struggles to become free in whatever way is viable. One wins her case in court; another mails himself in a large crate from his plantation to an abolitionists' headquarters. One, in despair, cuts her daughter's throat (shades of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*) and jumps into the river with her baby when her family is recaptured. The baby drowns, and Margaret Garner is sold into the deep south, where she dies in the rice fields. A slave named Jackson poses as his light-skinned wife's maid, and they both fool a boatload of Southern ladies all the way from New Orleans to Cincinnati. These tales of high drama never run longer than a few pages, illustrated with some of the Dillons' most emotive, strongly shaped art in black and white. The frontispiece and closing illustration alone speak volumes—a ship leaving a dungeon, with a broken doll on the floor; a family leaving a mammy-doll behind in a shack as they drive off in a mule-drawn wagon. The format is open, spacious, and inviting. This should be required reading for history curricula, but once introduced, it won't need to be. And don't cheat yourself of the opportunity to share it aloud. An index and bibliography are included. BH

HASKINS, JIM *Get On Board: The Story of the Underground Railroad*. Scholastic, 1993 [160p]

ISBN 0-590-45418-8 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6-10

Like Virginia Hamilton's more general history of slavery, reviewed above, Haskins' book on the Underground Railroad will hold readers' attention by the sheer drama of the subject, which Haskins has organized and presented with a fine balance between background information and human interest detail. Although there is some factual overlap in the two titles, Haskins' book is geared toward older readers and generally includes more extensive information within his more selective scope. Both sources, for instance, tell the story of Eliza, the slave who escaped across ice floes in the Ohio River, but from Haskins we also learn that she settled happily in Canada with her daughter and was visited by the Quaker couple who helped them through Indiana. In fact, Hamilton's and Haskins' books complement each other: Hamilton tells us that the carpenter who helped Henry Brown mail himself to freedom tried the same trick unsuccessfully with two more slaves and was imprisoned; Haskins tells us that he was a white man, which adds another dimension to the situation. Even more important is the way the two books reinforce each other: Hamilton's story about Jackson, the Alabama slave who disguises himself as his light-skinned wife's maid, finds a rich counterpart in Haskins' story of Ellen Craft, a light-skinned Georgia slave who poses as a planter traveling by steamer with her "slave"—in truth, her husband. Haskins has synthesized a massive amount of information here and has argued forcefully for the often downplayed role that African-Americans played in their own escape networks. A timeline and bibliography are appended. BH

HERSHEY, KATHLEEN *Cotton Mill Town*; illus. by Jeanette Winter. Dutton, 1993 32p

ISBN 0-525-44966-3 \$12.99

Ad 5-8 yrs

This idyllic country catalog tells of a little girl's visit to her grandmother's home in a cotton mill town, although "town" conjures up a vision of something slightly more bustling than the rural pleasures presented here. The girl picks berries and violets, swims in the mill pond with her aunt, goes fishing with Grandmama ("She never tells anybody I only caught a stick") and spends the evenings in Chinese checker games with the family. A trip into town brings some easy work at the peach farm, an ice cream treat, and a letter from home. These are felicitous attractions all, enhanced considerably by Jeanette Winter's richly toned and attentive paintings, but there's no story, and the language lacks the concentration that would at least give the book the (doubtful) appeal of a mood piece. Kids will enjoy the intense colors and roundly comfortable lines of the illustrations; like many catalogs, this book provides the details for daydreams. RS

HODGE, MERLE *For the Life of Laetitia*. Farrar, 1993 214p

ISBN 0-374-32447-6 \$15.00

R* Gr. 5-8

Laetitia Johnson is twelve years old, smart, and diligent enough to test into a government secondary school that is far removed, in both miles and milieu, from her rural Caribbean village. Raised by loving grandparents in a boisterous extended

family that is partially supported with money sent by her mother from New York, Laetitia cannot adjust to the cold, authoritarian household of her father and his new wife in La Puerta, where she lives during the school term. As the emotional and cultural gap grows, Laetitia's confidence erodes, especially in face of the prejudice—blacks and East Indians against each other—that she observes at school and the shock of watching her best friend suffer and fail because the men in Anjanee's family oppose her education. The vulnerability and pain exposed in the story are balanced and even sharpened by a satiric edge, as in the description of a social studies lesson "about Happy Families and their opposite, Broken Homes," the former illustrated by a picture of "some white people—a tall, square-jawed man looking ahead of him with great determination; a little woman with yellow hair who didn't quite come up to the man's shoulder; and next to the woman a boy and a girl with round, red cheeks, the boy up to the woman's waist, the girl up to the boy's shoulder . . . they seemed very pleased about something that was not in the picture." The discrepancies between this stereotype and the complex family dynamics realized in Laetitia's world exemplify Hodge's skillfully understated approach in her first novel, where the island dialect flows smoothly, the school dialogue is realistic, and the scenes are developed with confident energy. BH

JOHNSON, NEIL *Jack Creek Cowboy*; written and illus. with photographs by Neil Johnson. Dial, 1993 [32p]

Library ed. ISBN 0-8037-1229-4 \$14.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-8037-1228-6 \$14.99

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 3-5

This photoessay concentrates really on *two* young cowboys: Justin, ten, and Corey, twelve, whose father is a hand on a Wyoming ranch. This summer the brothers, who until now have done all their ranch work on foot, are going to help "work the cattle up on summer range." In order to prepare for this serious job, they must first learn to ride and rope; then they help herd the cattle up to the mountain pasture (still coming home every night). Finally the cattle are at their summer grazing in the National Forest, and for two weeks the hands must rotate the herd so that no overgrazing takes place. The ranching information is interesting, but it's oddly distributed at times (the paragraph on shoeing horses comes out of nowhere, and why do we suddenly hear about the boys' pigs at the end?); nor is it explained early or fully enough exactly what ranching task the boys are performing and why. Photographs vary from breathtaking (the home pastures with mountains beyond) to washed out, dark, or blurry (pictures of life at Jack Creek cabin) but they show a rustic milieu likely to please those with a longing for wide open spaces. It's fun to see the kids roughing it and moving from tenderfeet to ranch hands in a summer, and youngsters will envy them their life on the range. DS

JORDAN, SHERRYL *Winter of Fire*. Scholastic, 1993 [336p]

ISBN 0-590-45288-6 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

All Elsha remembers from her sixteen years as a Quelled slave is working in the firestone mines. Although the whole Quelled race is denied the right to speak or even look at members of the privileged Chosen class, Elsha alone is brave enough to speak out against the unjust traditions. Her stubbornness not only gets her into trouble, but also gives her the courage to fight the prejudice that has enslaved

generations of Quelled. The story's action is maintained as Elsha advances from a slave in the mines to the most powerful position in her world—Firelord. The ultimate solution to the Quelled and Chosen's common problems, cold and darkness, is a simplistic one of mind over matter; however, genre fans will savor Elsha's dignity, as well as her charisma, the loyalty of the companions she finds, and the ecological quirks of her badly-polluted world. The prose is high fantasy stately, and if the message is a little obvious, it is also undeniable—no group has the right to enslave another. KJ

KING-SMITH, DICK *Lady Daisy*; illus. by Jan Naimo Jones. Delacorte, 1993 [144p]

ISBN 0-385-30891-4 \$14.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 4-6

Here's the classic story of a venerable doll, left for lost in an attic, discovered—and brought back to life—by a loving new owner. The switch here is that the new owner is a boy, Ned, who endures insult and injury for his new passion for “playing with dolls.” Ned doesn't *play* with the exceedingly Victorian Lady Daisy, of course; he *talks* to her, she answers, and the two become fine friends. The cultural exchange (“‘You'll be telling me next that men wear earrings and necklaces.’ ‘Quite a lot of them do’”) is funny and unsophisticated, and there's plenty of real-boy action (Lady Daisy gets kidnapped) that provides momentum for the friendship. In a touching epilogue, Ned has passed the doll on to his daughter. While he can no longer hear Lady Daisy, the daughter is a natural successor: “‘Please, Lady Daisy Chain,’ said the small girl, ‘Daddy sends you his love.’” RS

LEIGH, NILA K. *Learning to Swim in Swaziland: A Child's-Eye View of a Southern African Country*; written and illus. by Nila K. Leigh. Scholastic, 1993 [48p]

ISBN 0-590-45938-4 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 2-4

More than a child's-eye view, this book is also a child-written and child-illustrated travelogue, with the handwritten text presumably being the penmanship of the young (twelve now, eight when she lived in Swaziland) author. The design is fresh and witty, and the book has an appealing scrapbook quality, but the drawing looks like it was done by an eight-year-old, which, of course, it was. The writing is equally naïve in a way that adults may find cute but that will probably not impress Nila's peers, as when she proffers a “few facts about Swaziland”: “It is smaller than New Jersey but sort of round. It is ruled by a King. It does not have a beach. . . .” The drawing of a Swazi man in native regalia with “feathers and sticks in his hair” belies the fact that Swazis generally dress in Western clothes; in general the book emphasizes exotica at the expense of telling us what it was like to live there. Books-by-kids make great classroom projects but do not generally travel well into the wider world. RS

LERNER PUBLICATIONS COMPANY *Ukraine*. Lerner, 1993 64p illus. with photographs (Then & Now)

ISBN 0-8225-2808-8 \$14.96

Ad Gr. 4-7

An entry in a new series of books devoted to the nations emerging from the former Soviet Union, *Ukraine* is up-to-date in its coverage, is efficiently formatted with

many good color photos, and gives a clear and evenhanded history and contemporary overview of the country. So what's missing? Any spark that would differentiate it from a comprehensive encyclopedia article. Perhaps due to its anonymous authorship, the book's tone tends towards the impersonal drone: "Tobacco and wine grapes grow in the hills of southwestern Ukraine and on the Crimean Peninsula. Livestock raised in Ukraine include cattle, sheep, poultry, and pigs." While the book will be useful for school reports (a glossary and index are appended) a good *National Geographic* article might provide a more involving balance of the informational and anecdotal, allowing kids the insights of an armchair visit. RS

LEVINE, ELLEN *Freedom's Children: Young Civil Rights Activists Tell Their Own Stories*. Putnam, 1993 [192p] illus. with photographs
ISBN 0-399-21893-9 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 6 up

With an organic sense of structure, Levine has stitched together thirty African-American participants' accounts of key incidents in the Civil Rights movement from 1955 to 1965. The life-and-death suspense inherent in each dramatic situation, from James Roberson's description of the bombing of the Bethel Baptist Church parsonage to Sheyann Webb's gripping memory of Bloody Sunday, moves this along like fiction. The details are vivid: how much Mickey Schwerner meant to a neighborhood boy, for instance, and how much James Chaney's brother looked up to him before both young men were murdered for their voter registration activities. Lighter moments come unexpectedly, as in a woman's recollection of being noticed, when she was a very young demonstrator on her own, by Martin Luther King, Jr., who takes her into his group for protection—"they said, 'Get her a club sandwich.' I didn't know what a club sandwich was. It was the biggest sandwich I had ever seen, and it was with chips and a pickle." Levine never intrudes more than necessary in providing brief explanations for background or context. Consistently, these witnesses make a reader realize the weight of the injustice they suffered, but they also project a sense that, despite the fear and suffering, their activities in the movement were the most important thing they've ever done, leaving them with deep-rooted values, a sense of achievement, and bonded relationships among those who worked with them. A chronology of events, notes on the contributors, and bibliography are appended. To be illustrated with photographs. BH

LEVITIN, SONIA *Annie's Promise*. Atheneum, 1993 [192p]
ISBN 0-689-31752-2 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

It's 1945, and German-Jewish refugee Annie Platt (of the Platt family featured in *Journey to America*, BCCB 2/71, and *Silver Days*, 4/89) is twelve going on thirteen in an America blown by "the howling winds of change." Annie's adventures, however, are more local: despite her family's initial reluctance, they allow her to accept an offered (and free) place at a coed and multiracial Quaker summer camp. At camp, Annie makes a good friend, has a serious crush, finds a few idols, and develops a serious enmity with a girl who's a bigoted bully. It may sound like fairly traditional camp-story fare, but this is a thoughtful book about blossoming and independence that possesses a particular poignancy due to its characters and time. Levitin has the integrity to leave in loose ends and sad truths without making them

the point of the book: there's no rapprochement between Annie and the bully (upon whom Annie plays a truly nasty trick), Annie and her African-American camp friend have a disastrous post-camp encounter, after which they never see each other again, and there are occasional reminders that the war has taken its toll on Annie's relatives (her father's family have all perished in the Holocaust). Readers will empathize with Annie's struggle to define herself in the face of her strong family, and they'll enjoy this well-written account of her summer adventures. DS

LITTKKE, LAEL *Getting Rid of Rhoda*; Paper ed. ISBN 0-87579-636-2; 156p. *The Mystery of Ruby's Ghost*; Paper ed. ISBN 0-87579-656-7; 166p. Each book: Cinnamon Tree/Deseret, 1992 Paper ed. \$4.95 (The Bee Theres) R Gr. 4-7

Okay, so it's another series about five girls who have a club; the switch here is that Becca, Sunshine, Carlie, Marybeth, and Elena are the Bee There girls, a closely knit group of Mormons in the same "Beehive" class. The setting is contemporary Southern California; the girls share the same concerns as their Sweet Valley secular sisters (boys, friends, parents); the religious background is more social than sacred ("Jason was the ward hunk, but it was a well-known fact that his eyesight didn't register any girl under fifteen"). In *Rhoda*, the girls conspire to rid themselves of a starchy new Beehive leader; *Ruby's Ghost* takes the girls to a restored old Mormon settlement in Utah, where they solve the romantic mystery of a girl who disappeared long ago. While remaining faithful to the formulas that series readers demand, Littke writes smoothly and with some wit, and her Bee There girls help and harass each other with equal enthusiasm. Non-Mormon readers won't understand the references to stake dances and sacrament meetings, although surely such details are no more exotic than the plenitude of ski weekends, fancy summer camps, and first-class trips to Europe that most series characters find waiting around every corner. RS

LYON, GEORGE ELLA *Dreamplace*; illus. by Peter Catalanotto. Jackson/Orchard, 1993 32p

Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08616-X \$15.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05466-7 \$15.95

Ad 5-8 yrs

Lyon's low-key prose poem and Catalanotto's evanescent watercolors combine to convey the experience of a young girl wandering the ruins of an Anasazi village and thinking about what life might have been like for the cliff-dwellers: "Food, too,/ had to be grown above them or hunted below them// harvest and kill/ borne home on their backs// hands/ and/ feet/ finding/ slots/ in the/ stone." Although there's potential drama in the Anasazi's tragic abandonment of their homes, the story is oversmoothed. It's a quiet, contemplative poem, probably too understated for its picture book audience, and the hazy, light-softened paintings are skillful but studied, echoing the almost monotonous tone of the text. RS

MCCOLLEY, KEVIN *The Walls of Pedro García*. Delacorte, 1993 [112p]

ISBN 0-385-30806-X \$15.00

Reviewed from galleys

NR Gr. 5-8

Pedro García is twelve, and he and his grandfather live on a Mexican estate along with the rest of the servants of Roberto de Lupe. When the American groundskeeper orders a wall built that cuts the servants off from their river view and breezes ("the

river was gone, replaced by cold, gray stone that did not reflect golden the light of the setting sun”), Pedro takes his objections—at first, he thinks, successfully—to Señor de Lupe himself. Señor de Lupe eventually threatens Pedro and his grandfather with dismissal, however, if the boy keeps up his protests, which shatters Pedro’s self-image of adulthood. This story is paralleled by a recurring dream of Pedro’s about a deer hunted by wolves, a metaphor he attempts to understand and use as a guidepost on the road to manhood. The sentences are square and inexplicably uncolloquial (“It was not good to speak too quickly to maidens”), filled with metaphor and repetition in a way that combines with the belabored theme of manliness to make the book seem parodic of Hemingway, who would not, however, have fallen into the sentimental and self-conscious poesy rampant here (“Pedro García was born a man. On a sunny summer day with the heat shimmering over the bean fields, his mother dropped her hoe and lay down between the rows and he was born a man. From her blood and her pain he came into the world, crying the cry of a man. . . . In his tiny infant eyes, she saw the pride of a man, and in his grip on her little finger, she felt the strength of one. Pedro García was born a man, and he lived as a man. He knew that one day he would die as one”). Nor is there a plot or theme worth the trip: the dream metaphor is unsubtle and unnecessary, and Pedro’s battles with the groundskeeper aren’t particularly believable or interesting. DS

McKENNA, COLLEEN O’SHAUGHNESSY *Camp Murphy*. Scholastic, 1993 [160p]
ISBN 0-590-45807-8 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 4-6

Collette, Marsha, and Sarah are looking forward to the week-long summer camp for little kids they are planning for Collette’s backyard, but disaster strikes when Sarah finds she has to go to Ohio, and the only other counselors the girls can find are *boys*. More predictably patterned than most of the Collette books, this entry also suffers from the unvarying focus on camp activities: Collette’s backyard begins to feel a bit claustrophobic. Still, the banter and squabbling are fun, there’s lots of fresh humor at the expense of the little campers, and the suspense of Mrs. Murphy’s pregnancy (announced in *Mother Murphy*, BCCB 2/92) is concluded happily—though one still wonders how it started, since Mr. Murphy is hardly ever around. RS

McPHERSON, STEPHANIE SAMMARTINO *I Speak for the Women: A Story about Lucy Stone*; illus. by Brian Liedahl. Carolrhoda, 1992 64p (Creative Minds Books)
ISBN 0-87614-740-6

Ad Gr. 4-7

This book traces Lucy Stone’s busy life from her hardworking childhood in Massachusetts through her attendance at Oberlin College to her speeches across the country for women’s rights and the abolition of slavery. On a more personal level, Lucy managed to convert both her overworked mother and initially antagonistic father to her cause, and she suffered harassment for refusing to take her husband’s name. The biography is simply written and accessibly formatted—big print, lots of white space—like the other books in the series (e.g., McPherson’s *Rooftop Astronomer*, BCCB 11/90), and it covers well the interrelationship of the abolitionist and feminist movements in the nineteenth century and the sacrifices the latter made for the former. We don’t get much sense of Lucy’s character beyond her determination and devotion to her causes, and it’s surprising that the text never mentions how “Lucy Stoner” become a term for any married woman who retained

her own name. It's an approachable and readable—if not deep—biography, however, on a lesser-limned figure of the era. Black-and-white illustrations are stiff and awkward but do not romanticize their subject; a bibliography is appended. DS

MAESTRO, BETSY *The Story of Money*; illus. by Giulio Maestro. Clarion, 1993 [48p]

ISBN 0-395-56242-2 \$15.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 3-6

The Maestros prove rather decisively here that while money changes everything, it's more to the point that everything changes money. Their concise history goes all the way back to hunters-and-gatherers, who had no need for money ("There was no place to spend it"), through bartering cultures and on to the use of products such as salt, shells, blankets, and barley as currency. The Sumerians were the first to invent metal money (out of silver—"Everybody wanted it"), and various countries went on to further refine the process by which humans could trade, up to and including credit cards and ATMs: "In the future, there will be other kinds of electronic cashless money." Explanations are clear and seamless in the way they explain how changing societal needs affect what kind of money people use and how it is transacted. In depicting human figures and landscapes the illustrations are somewhat generic, but the pictures of various currencies are detailed and usually life-sized, and the format is large and spacious. Appended material includes various anecdotes about money, but there is neither an index nor a bibliography. RS

MANGO, KARIN N. *Portrait of Miranda*. Zolotow/HarperCollins, 1993 232p Library ed. ISBN 0-06-021778-2 \$15.89

Trade ed. ISBN 0-06-021777-4 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-10

Miranda's a junior in high school, and she still hasn't figured out who she really is: oppressed by the figure of her strong-willed and mysterious grandmother Miranda, whose portrait hangs in the family parlor, she unsuccessfully attempts to create a similarly dramatic character for herself, which leaves her feeling hollow. She's also frightened that she will go deaf at an early age, just like her grandmother and her mother before her. Miranda's involvement in the school play (*The Tempest*, in which she plays—of course—Miranda) brings her closer to Noel, a British boy in America just for the year, and the gently blossoming romance allows Miranda to develop confidence in herself as a person. The book is a little overstuffed with subplots (Miranda's grandmother, her mother's deafness, the school play, Miranda's fascination with a bag lady), but Miranda's relationship with the appealing Noel is tenderly and engagingly depicted. The book deals matter-of-factly and overtly with the important adolescent question of identity, and it will strike a familiar and comforting chord with many readers. DS

MANSON, AINSLIE *A Dog Came, Too: A True Story*; illus. by Ann Blades. McElderry, 1993 32p

ISBN 0-689-50567-1 \$13.95

R 5-9 yrs

Based on information in Alexander Mackenzie's exploration writings, this book tells the story of the dog who accompanied the explorer and his team on his eigh-

teenth-century crossing of Canada, the first such crossing by Europeans. The big brown dog "had never worn a collar or had a family to call his own," and he "didn't even have a name." The book—and possibly Mackenzie—simply calls him *Our Dog*, describing his important contributions in fetching downed game, retrieving lost paddles on the river, guarding men and food from animals, and galloping along the rocky shore to keep up with the canoes (there was no space for him in the boats). He becomes separated from the explorers right before their moment of victory, but he eventually meets up with them again and returns east with them in triumph. This is an intriguing story with an adventurous backdrop, and although it occasionally ascribes unprovable thoughts to *Our Dog* ("Our Dog knew the explorer usually followed rivers") or tells as fact undocumentable actions (anything the dog did in the absence of human chroniclers), the narration treats the animal with unsentimental respect and generally keeps him authentically doggy. The watercolors are in pale and liquid tones that somehow make the scenes temporally distant despite their modern line; the human faces are somewhat naïve in execution, but the pictures of *Our Dog* alone in the wilderness are misty and somber. After reading this, kids may find tales of explorers *without* dogs disappointing, but it's really not a westward expansion book so much as a restrained and effective true-life dog story. DS

MARKLE, SANDRA *A Rainy Day*; illus. by Cathy Johnson. Orchard, 1993 [32p]
Library ed. ISBN 0-531-08576-7 \$14.99

Trade ed. ISBN 0-531-05976-6 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-7 yrs

Rather than starting with a description of the water cycle (a logical place to begin but rather abstract for younger children), Markle and Johnson open their explanation of rain with the sensory experiences most children will be familiar with: feeling the drops, hearing the wind, watching the ways various animals seek shelter (or not, as in the case of ducks and earthworms). Why cardboard collapses when wet, why raincoats are made of rubber or plastic, how a rainbow is formed—in a smooth narrative format, the book answers children's questions about rain in a way that adds up to a cogent description of the cycle. Johnson's smooth watercolors provide atmosphere and at the same time amplify statements in the text, as in a sequence of double-spread landscapes that show the progression of puddles into ponds and drains and rivers to the ocean and back into the air. Many books make attractive rainy day reading, but this one is especially fine when paired with looking out the window. RS

MAYNE, WILLIAM *Low Tide*. Delacorte, 1993 [208p]
ISBN 0-385-30904-X \$14.00

R* Gr. 7-10

It's turn-of-the-century New Zealand, and Charlie, his tagalong little sister Elisabeth, and his Maori friend Wiremu have been swept up by a tidal wave and deposited in wild and unknown territory. Their worst fears are confirmed when they encounter a mythical wild man, the cannibalistic Koroua, who haunts the hills ("Ouaigh," he said. Its teeth were black from eating people"). The old Koroua, hampered by an inability to communicate, proves kindly and eventually helps the children back to their town. Mayne has created a superb variant on the adventure tale: he keeps completely to the children's point of view and never narratively demonstrates knowledge beyond theirs, so that one never knows, until the very end, that the story is not a fantasy, and the mysterious ship, the tidal wave, the ghost town copy of the

children's home village, and of course the Koroua himself (he proves to be a shipwrecked German sailor) are elements of a realistic story. The tone is carefully controlled and utterly reasonable, with both humor ("Eating others did not seem wrong to him, unless he was going to be eaten. Then it ought to be stopped," thinks Charlie) and harshness ("Why did you not stay away if this is all you can say or do?" thunders Charlie's father, hearing his son's wild tale upon his return), but it also has a quiet poetry of the everyday that makes Elisabeth's growing attachment to the Koroua quite touching. Kids who pick this up for the adventure story will keep reading for the writing and the suspense; a book where you really don't know what's going to happen next is welcome, so don't spoil it by booktalking the ending away. DS

MOORE, LILIAN *Adam Mouse's Book of Poems*; illus. by Kathleen Garry McCord. Karl/Atheneum, 1992 53p
ISBN 0-689-31765-4 \$11.95 R Gr. 2-4

Whether or not the kids in your classroom or library are fans of the Adam Mouse books (*I'll Meet You at the Cucumbers*, BCCB 3/88; *Don't Be Afraid, Amanda*), they should have a chance to hear these poems. The first, "Conversation with a Salamander," cleverly acknowledges the convenience of growing back a tail or legs that are lost. The last, "Waiting," makes a wise—but not tiresomely wise—chant: "Waiting/ is a road that/ winds,// winds to a faraway/ end.// No matter how you/ hurry/ the road has another bend." In between are thirty poems in several sections celebrating animals, plants, and natural ("Sky View") or manmade ("In the Library") phenomena familiar within a child's experience. Overall, the words are easy to read but meaningful, and the tone is quiet but laced with humor, as in the description of "Arabella the Cat," who wears a collar of bells ("ring-a-ling ding-a-ling . . . jing-a-ling ting-a-ling") that tells where she goes "so softly,/ on pounce-ready toes." Small, light, pen-and-ink sketches nestle at the end of every other poem or so. BH

MORPURGO, MICHAEL *Twist of Gold*. Viking, 1993 246p
ISBN 0-670-84851-4 \$14.99 M Gr. 5-8

Like Marita Conlon-McKenna's *Wildflower Girl* (BCCB 1/93), this is a story of survivors from the Irish famine immigrating to America, but unlike McKenna's more realistic work, this is filled with fortunate coincidences that repeat themselves in a contrived pattern. In defiance of army regulations, a British dragoon keeps Sean and his sister Annie from starvation; a ship's officer and a fiddler conspire to retrieve the O'Briens' golden torc from an evil captain and help the two children become the only survivors of a wreck; two rich sisters and their black servant ("I's can see I's gonna have to keep my eye on you two") rescue the children from the Boston streets; a riverboat colonel restores the torc, stolen again, and gives up his life for the children's safety; a mountain man rescues them from the desert and offers to give them half the gold he's found; Indians return the torc (stolen once more); and finally, after crossing the continent to California, the children find not only their father, but also their mother, whom they thought had died back in Ireland. Despite occasional information loading, the writing is competent, the characterizations are consistent, and the action is fast paced, but to impose such tidy plotting on historical fiction distorts the difficult immigrant experience into an unlikely adventure. BH

MYERS, WALTER DEAN *Malcolm X: By Any Means Necessary*. Scholastic, 1993 [224p] illus. with photographs
 ISBN 0-590-46484-1 \$13.95
 Reviewed from galleys R* Gr. 6-12

"People do not just 'happen' in history." What distinguishes this biography from many others in children's and young adult literature is its point of view; instead of presenting a collection of facts, Myers shapes the information on Malcolm X with a consistent, well-supported argument as to what determined the course of his subject's life. Motivation is as important as action here, and neither is neglected as Myers observes the "blending of the four Malcolms into one dynamic personality that is distinctively American in its character": the child whose father was murdered; the teenager who turned to crime in his fight for survival on the streets and for a strong identity; the religious organizer determined to restore pride and justice to African-Americans (especially young men striking back at racism in self-destructive ways); and tragically—perhaps inevitably, according to Malcolm X's own prediction—the defiantly maturing philosopher gunned down in his prime. Both the writing and the photographs are direct. Myers' book can give perspective on and lead to Haley's *Autobiography of Malcolm X*, which will be tough reading for junior high and even some high school students, who nevertheless would do well to follow up a viewing of Spike Lee's popular movie with some varied print sources, including this one and a number of others that are listed in Myers' bibliography following a chronology of Malcolm X's life. BH

NAYLOR, PHYLLIS REYNOLDS *Alice in April*. Karl/Atheneum, 1993 [176p]
 ISBN 0-689-31805-7 \$14.95
 Reviewed from galleys R Gr. 5-9

"When am I . . . well, officially, I mean . . . a woman?" Alice (of *Alice in Rapture, Sort of*, BCCB 6/89, etc.) asks. The male doctor to whom she addresses the question after her first post-pubescent physical (and Naylor gives a tender, reassuring, and funny account of that experience) basically says it's a state of mind and it's up to her. Her aunt says that Alice's thirteenth birthday makes her officially the Woman of the House, in charge of the household she shares with her brother and widowed father. At school, womanhood seems to occur when the boys award a girl the name of a state that supposedly suits her physical contours—Alice's friend Elizabeth is devastated to be labeled "Illinois" ("Illinois is f-f-flat!"), Pamela is thrilled to be the mountainous Wyoming, and Alice is more and more uneasy about her possible designation, or, worse, being passed over. Naylor sensitively handles the more serious threads of the story, such as Alice's longing for a connection with her mother and the eventually suicidal despair of her former enemy, Denise Whitlock. The regular cast (Dad, brother Lester, Alice's friend/boyfriend Patrick, and the rest) provides both dramatic and emotional support as well as enlivening the pages. Readers new to Alice's adventures won't be lost, and Alice fans will welcome another sweet and witty chapter in the Alice McKinley *bildungsroman*. DS

NELSON, VAUNDA MICHEAUX *Mayfield Crossing*; illus. by Leonard Jenkins. Putnam, 1993 [96p]
 ISBN 0-399-22331-2 \$14.95
 Reviewed from galleys Ad Gr. 4-6

With Mayfield's school boarded up, the neighborhood kids gear up for Parkview

Elementary, a larger, central facility where it quickly becomes apparent that Mayfielders, especially black Mayfielders, are not welcome. The eight friends (some black, some white) determine to stick together as they always have, however, and one of them proposes a baseball game to challenge their racist rivals after an ugly incident of fighting on the playground. Good is good and bad is bad here: the good guys are never anything but generous to each other; the bad guys are despicable bullies, one of them physically attacking the narrator, though she's smaller than he, when she does well in class. There's also a Boo Radley-like character in the form of Old Hairy, whom the narrator comes to accept when she begins to understand how painful it is not to be accepted. Although all the characters could use more depth—including parents who seem idyllically virtuous—the game play and group interactions carry this first novel, set in 1960 just before Kennedy's election. BH

PERETZ, I. L. *The Magician's Visit: A Passover Tale*; ad. by Barbara Diamond Goldin; illus. by Robert Andrew Parker. Viking, 1993 32p
ISBN 0-670-84840-9 \$14.99

Reviewed from galleys

R 4-7 yrs

A magician mysteriously appears in the town square and dazzles the Passover crowds with his tricks. A poor but upright couple, who have "just spent a winter the likes of which they would not wish on even their worst enemy," open their door to the magician, who sets a Seder feast upon their bare table. True to tradition, he is the prophet Elijah, sent with a gift from heaven to reward the couple for their faith and charity towards persons even poorer than they. Goldin has simplified Peretz' tale without losing—or trying to explain—the sense of mystical wonder. Parker picks up on the tone with his expressionistic, thickly textured paintings, in which mottled colors are subtly juggled against dark backgrounds. As much a folktale as a religious legend, this will have the broad appeal of introducing Passover to non-Jewish children as well as entertaining Jewish children who celebrate the holiday. BH

RINALDI, ANN *In My Father's House*. Scholastic, 1993 [304p]
ISBN 0-590-44730-0 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

M Gr. 6-10

Rinaldi's latest historical drama is based upon an intriguing fact: the first battle of the Civil War (Manassas) was fought on the land of Will McLean; the terms of Lee's surrender to Grant were signed on the same man's table, at a house he was renting in Appomattox. This is a fabulous frame, but unfortunately, the author has attempted to work too much information about the war into a novel about McLean's family. The heroine, Oscie, is McLean's stepdaughter, and she's a classic Civil War heroine. Headstrong, heedless, brave (and if the cover is anything to go by, a looker), Oscie loves unwisely, cares for her sisters, and fights with her stepfather. Only the last relationship, fictionally developed through a series of confrontations, has any real impact. Neither Oscie's sisters nor her suitors have enough personality to sustain our attention. The view of slavery here is Margaret Mitchell-benign, with a convenient distinction made between good and bad slaveholders: "We owned slaves, yes, but our nigras were family." But the real problem here is the sprawling canvas, with the information on the progress of the war sometimes going on for paragraphs and distracting attention from the fictional focus. RS

ROCKWELL, ANNE *Pots and Pans*; illus. by Lizzy Rockwell. Macmillan, 1993 [24p]

ISBN 0-02-777631-X \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 1-3 yrs

A little girl and a little boy invite the reader into their kitchen, which is full of "lots and lots of pots and pans and lots of other things." There follows a page-by-page inventory of kitchen implements (such as wooden spoons, a colander, plastic storage containers) with which little teensies could play without serious damage to themselves or to the kitchen (although a truly enterprising toddler might be better off without those chopsticks). There's no plot—after the list, the text announces "Hooray for pots and pans! Will you play, too?" and that's the end of it all. This would be a good lap-read or even floor-read for the kitchen, since your audience will be scrambling around for their equivalent utensils, although you could try and make things more manageable by relating it to toy cookware rather than the real McCoy. The watercolor children are too sweet and rosy-cheeked and pristine but fortunately incidental; the pots and pans are beautiful objects in their isolated splendor upon the page, although kids will find more familiar the clutter (if not the never-used freshness) of the plastic storage boxes and their lids. Slight and idealized, but it could provide some fun—and a satisfying mess underfoot. DS

SALAT, CRISTINA *Living in Secret*. Bantam, 1993 183p

ISBN 0-553-08670-7 \$15.00

R Gr. 5-8

See this month's Big Picture, page 203, for review.

SCRIBNER, VIRGINIA *Gopher Takes Heart*; illus. by Janet Wilson. Viking, 1993 136p

ISBN 0-670-84839-5 \$13.99

R Gr. 4-6

Matthew Goff, known to friends and acquaintances as Gopher, has a serious bully problem: every day before school he's forced to surrender his milk money to fierce Fletcher Simpson (rumored to have a brother in prison). When the fifth-grade class allots artistic Gopher three dollars to buy material and make a valentine for their teacher, he rightly fears that Fletcher will try for that money too. Gopher finally takes a stand and he finds Fletcher not such a bad guy after all, and he's grateful for Fletcher's help with the rather aesthetically disappointing valentine. The eventual rapprochement of victim and bully (who's lonely and doesn't know how to make friends—and his brother's really just at college) may be a trifle predictable, but Scribner keeps it energetic. The haunting pain and humiliation of being a victim are particularly well-captured, as is the arbitrariness of the designation (Gopher is stunned when classmates—*girl*/classmates—simply refuse to tolerate Fletcher's behavior). Some nice classroom gestalt flavors the book, with kids conspiring on the teacher-pleasing project and Gopher clearly heading into grade-school romance with perky Stephanie. It's a good boy-centered school story with sympathy for the dark moments and a cheerful depiction of the lighter ones. DS

SILLS, LESLIE *Visions: Stories about Women Artists*. Whitman, 1993 [64p]

ISBN 0-8075-8491-6 \$18.95

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-9

A successor to the author's earlier book *Inspirations* (BCCB 1/89), which covered

Georgia O'Keeffe, Frida Kahlo, Alice Neel, and Faith Ringgold, *Visions* treats the life and work of artists Mary Cassatt, Leonora Carrington, Betye Saar, and Mary Frank. These four subjects may have been chosen to exemplify variety, since they differ in era, style, and region, but they're all interesting and biography-worthy artists, and the contemporaneity of the last three may particularly inspire young readers. The biographies are very simply written, tracing each woman's life from early childhood influences to the flowering of her talent; the text's greatest value, however, is in providing background and continuity for the stunning artwork reproduced in color throughout the book. Cassatt's tender mother-and-child paintings may be familiar, but readers are less likely to know Carrington's eerie, symbolic surrealist painting, Saar's sometimes grand, sometimes homely *assemblages*, and Frank's textural and evocative sculptured figures. It's great to see an eye-catching and readable book that includes living artists, making it clear that the tradition continues and could include a hopeful young reader. DS

SILVER, NORMAN *An Eye for Color*. Dutton, 1993 186p
ISBN 0-525-44859-4 \$14.99

M Gr. 7-10

These twelve brief, loosely connected stories focus on a South African Jewish boy's random growth of awareness that apartheid shapes his society and that he has a role in acquiescing to it. Basil's indecisive and usually ineffective responses to the injustice surrounding him are realistically drawn, and many of the other characters are vivid, including an Indian who has supported his retarded daughter and grandchildren by preserving his dead father's thumb to make prints on the pension papers, and a girl whom the government isolates from her white family by a decision of the Race Classification Offices that she carries "colored" genes. Unfortunately, the writing style is grammatically awkward ("he and me opened our front door with the key"), the plot structures are thin, and the efforts at humor fall flat ("I reckon stamps were for the birds, and even then birds have got better things to do with their time"). Without a stronger sense of irony, some of the narrator's observations will sound pretty offensive to U. S. audiences, too ("This man couldn't have been Jewish because his skin wasn't white and his hair grew in little clumps on his head like a colored"). In the end, Basil's ploy to opt out of the military by faking schizophrenia leaves the reader wondering whether he's done it for the sake of those he's seen persecuted or because of a personal squeamishness that keeps him from wanting to *see* them persecuted. Has he learned courage or has he learned to lay low? In fiction which depends for its thematic cohesion on some perception into this issue, there aren't enough clues in the protagonist's action or depth in his characterization to clarify a reader's understanding. BH

SMITH, DORIS BUCHANAN *Best Girl*. Viking, 1993 [144p]
ISBN 0-670-83752-0 \$13.99

M Gr. 4-6

Nealy Compton is her hot-tempered mother's "best girl." That doesn't keep Mama from slapping her hard enough to knock her over, but at least Nealy still has a home, whereas her older sister has been locked out for defying Mama's volatile commands. Unfortunately, this complex situation is upstaged by the action—a fire that consumes a neighbor's house under which Nealy had hidden her treasures and sheltered in hard times. To these two plot strands Smith adds a third, about Nealy's protest against old trees being cut down on their block; a fourth, about Nealy's discovering the arsonist by sighting a bicycle stolen from the burned house;

and a fifth, about Nealy's various relationships with the neighbor who suspects her of arson, with a family friend who seems to appear out of nowhere to restore the house, and with her absentee father. Each of these subplots offers intriguing possibilities, but none is adequately developed, and the reader feels shifted from one to the other in what seems more a slice of life than an internally shaped work of fiction. BH

SNYDER, ZILPHA KEATLEY *Fool's Gold*. Delacorte, 1993 [224p]
ISBN 0-385-30908-2 \$14.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Thirteen-year-old Rudy is a "natural-born extrovert and probably the second most popular guy at Pyramid Middle School." Most popular guy is Rudy's perennial pal Barney, but lately Barney has been spending time with urban transplant and self-styled cool guy Tyler Lewis, much to Rudy's dismay. Tyler, who brings out the dangerous daredevil streak in Barney, plans a search for gold in a local abandoned mine. Rudy suffers from claustrophobia as a result of a traumatic childhood experience and tries everything possible to get out of the horrifying prospect, but he ends up conquering his fears to help his friend when Barney gets lost in the mine alone. Though the psychologizing can become excessive (everybody, including Rudy's little sisters, has a well-explained reason for the insecurity which prompts his or her behavior), the dynamics of two friends reluctantly becoming three are well explored. With the exception of the wise and folksy old neighbor, the characterization is strong, credible, and interesting, with Rudy appealingly unaware of his own good-kidness. Mix that in with some horseback riding and mine-exploring in the California Gold Country, and you've got a likeable adventure. DS

SUTCLIFF, ROSEMARY *The Minstrel and the Dragon Pup*; illus. by Emma Chichester Clark. Candlewick, 1993 [42p]
ISBN 1-56402-098-3 \$16.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

An accident with a dragon's egg unites a wandering minstrel with an orphaned baby dragon. As Lucky the dragon grows older, he and the minstrel remain devoted to each other. When a traveling showman kidnaps Lucky, the two best friends are miserable until they find one another again. Sometimes the simplest plots are the best, especially when combined with Sutcliff's fine writing and Clark's muted oil-pastel art. The illustrations depict an enchanted world in which the happy ending is very believable. It's long for a picture book, but the length is worthwhile because Sutcliff's leisurely prose enhances the flavor of the story. The true happiness of the reunited friends is evoked on the last double spread, where "the world smelled of sunshine and tree shadows and wayside dust, and there was a cuckoo calling in the next valley." KJ

SWENTZELL, RINA *Children of Clay: A Family of Pueblo Potters*; illus. with photographs by Bill Steen. Lerner, 1992 40p (We Are Still Here: Native Americans Today)
ISBN 0-8225-2654-9 \$14.96

R Gr. 3-5

For slightly younger readers than Diane Hoyt-Goldsmith's *Pueblo Storyteller* or Marcia Keegan's *Pueblo Boy* (both BCCB 4/91), this also seems to be written more from an insider's viewpoint. The focus is Gia Rose, a Santa Clara Pueblo potter

whose trip to the mountains to collect clay begins the book. Her extended family is involved in the whole process, from digging to cleaning, soaking, shaping, and firing. Descriptions of the work are accompanied by references to cultural lore (including a story Gia Rose tells her grandchildren) that explain Pueblo traditions. As in other titles of this series (Peters' *Clambake* and Regguinti's *The Sacred Harvest*, BCCB 11/92), the color photographs are abundant, fresh, and clear, with maps, landscapes, and closeups varying the format. Michael Dorris gives a brief introduction; a glossary and a current bibliography of children's books about contemporary Pueblo culture are appended. BH

TOLL, NELLY S. *Behind the Secret Window: A Memoir of a Hidden Childhood*; written and illus. by Nelly Toll. Dial, 1993 [176p]
ISBN 0-8037-1362-2 \$17.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 5-8

Although the quality of writing varies widely in the many Holocaust memoirs being published now, they all contain stories under pressure to be told, and this is no exception. Since Toll is more an artist than a writer, she sometimes forgets the importance of narrative details and loses impact by generalizing: "Food was very hard to get. Although it was strictly forbidden, the adults continued to risk their lives to smuggle goods from the Aryan part of town." When she focuses on the specifics of her own story, however, the tedium of waiting in a bricked-up bay window hidden from the Nazis, the tense dynamic with the couple who hides her and her mother, and the narrow escapes from discovery are unforgettably clear. Though not as cohesive and gripping as Isabella Leitner's *The Big Lie* (BCCB 1/93), this first-person account is simple without sacrificing the complexities of the situation. Twenty-nine full-color reproductions of naively eloquent paintings, which were made by the author as an eight-year-old in hiding, illustrate the book. BH

TOWLE, WENDY *The Real McCoy: The Life of an African-American Inventor*; illus. by Wil Clay. Scholastic, 1993 [32p]
ISBN 0-590-43596-5 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 2-4

This picture-book biography covers the life of Elijah McCoy, born to former slaves in Canada, from his engineering studies in Scotland and his hard manual labor on the American railroad to his life as an inventor and important member of the Detroit community. McCoy, creator of the lubricating oil cup that may have given rise to the expression "the real McCoy," was indeed a technological and entrepreneurial pioneer who made important contributions in spite of racial discrimination. Towle states that biographical information about McCoy is scarce, but it seems plausible that more might have been found or more general period information employed (à la Diane Stanley in her biographies) to create a clearer picture of the man and his times; the few quotes from contemporaries make one wish for more. The acrylic illustrations are thickly pigmented and dominated by woody browns and lamplight yellows that give them an appropriately turn-of-the-century feel, although aspects of them are occasionally confusing (the map of the McCoy family's Underground Railroad route to Canada makes the geography very unclear, and it's hard to tell why McCoy's lawn sprinkler design is pictured as a turtle or why the inventor is depicted with a space capsule on the last page).

McCoy is an important but little-known figure in American history, and his work with exciting things like trains and gadgets will make him appealing to kids. DS

VANCLEAVE, JANICE *Janice VanCleave's Molecules*: ISBN 471-55054-X, illus. by Karen Pellaton; *Janice VanCleave's Gravity*: ISBN 0-471-55050-7, illus. by Laurel Aiello; *Janice VanCleave's Animals*: ISBN 0-471-55052-3, illus. by Kathleen McCord. Each book: Wiley, 1993 Paper ed. \$9.95 90p (Spectacular Science Projects) Ad Gr. 3-5

These three experiment books have a science fair twist. Each book contains two- or three-page descriptions of an experiment, beginning with a problem: "How do elephants use their ears to cool their bodies?," "Why do things fall over?," "What happens when the shape of a protein molecule is changed?" The material that follows includes procedures, results, and explanations, but the results are written out so completely that it is almost unnecessary to do the experiment, although the end of every experiment presents a new related problem to investigate. In general, the experiments in *Molecules* and *Gravity* are more clear than those in the *Animals* volume. For example, the experiment that investigates how newts, salamanders, and fish hear without ears involves moving salt crystals around in one pan and water in another. The author is explaining by metaphor how the animals would react to these vibrations, but the allusion is confusing. The introduction to each book explains how to set up an experiment in a successful science fair format, and a few black-and white-line drawings illustrate the directions in each procedure section. Although the series seems a bit like science-fair-in-a-can, these books will give a lot of ideas and help to budding scientists. KJ

WEAVER-GELZER, CHARLOTTE *In the Time of Trouble*. Dutton, 1993 275p ISBN 0-525-44973-6 \$15.99 Ad Gr. 6-9

In an ambitious novel that begins in 1958 during the political uprising that eventually drives the French from Cameroon, fourteen-year-old Jessie realizes that she has long felt abandoned by her parents, who send their three children to boarding school so they can concentrate on their teaching at a Presbyterian mission station. While Jessie's twin brother has his piano playing and her sister excels at math, Jessie struggles to find a calling of her own, to work through the resentment she feels toward her mother and sister, and to understand the political situation that eventually threatens her parents' lives. When the author allows the characters' thoughts and actions to speak for themselves, her writing shows real power. Sometimes she overexplains her protagonist's feelings (Jessie's heart is forever lurching or thudding or burning in sometimes mixed metaphors), overexposes her theme ("Was that what Mom meant by using her gifts?"), or substitutes an explanation for action, as in the interruption of a moving scene where the siblings resolve their differences by "playing twins," a childhood game that could have been forecast earlier instead of described in a summary flashback. Once, the point of view shifts abruptly from Jessie to her mother, held captive in the jungle; at another point, a mysterious African prophet-figure appears and disappears suddenly with a jarring effect that overwhelms the subtle religious issues lacing the story. However, narrative control comes from experience, and the character dynamics in this first novel are strong enough to create suspense and sustain interest. BH

WILKINSON, BRENDA *Definitely Cool*. Scholastic, 1993 [176p]
ISBN 0-590-46186-9 \$13.95

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

In breathless, exclamatory prose Wilkinson relates the school saga of Roxanne, who's excited and apprehensive about going to a new, suburban junior high. Like Chocolate's *NEATE™ to the Rescue*, reviewed above, this is a fairly generic school-and-friends story that features an African-American cast. The author delivers some messages about being true to yourself, and listening to mother, and staying away from the bad crowd; the story is basically plotless but easygoing and cozy in its reliance on the little dramas of a young teen's day-to-day life. RS

WILLEY, MARGARET *The Melinda Zone*. Bantam, 1993 [144p]
ISBN 0-553-09215-4 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

Ad Gr. 5-8

Spending the summer with relatives in Michigan because her divorced parents each made plans that did not include her, Melinda, fifteen, is looking forward to some cozy family time. But her older cousin Sharon, whom Melinda has long admired, is in the throes of romance and manages simultaneously to avoid all family togetherness while keeping herself the focus of the family's exasperated attention. Margaret Willey often uses the theatrical troubles of one girl to throw the quieter problems of another into relief (see *Finding David Dolores*, BCCB 5/86); here, however, the author's subtle geometry of family and friendship is programmatic: we see much more of the characters talking about their relationships than we see of the relationships themselves. This is particularly true in the long conversations Melinda has with the boy next door about how she feels about her parents. The characters are fully individualized, so readers will care very much about their problems, but the sacrifice of dramatic conflict and resolution to the *discussion* of conflict and resolution gives the book a therapeutizing distance. RS

WILLIAMS, SHEILA, ed. *The Loch Moose Monster: More Stories from Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*. Delacorte, 1993 [304p]
ISBN 0-385-30600-8 \$16.00

Reviewed from galleys

R Gr. 7-12

This is a strong collection of fourteen short stories from *Isaac Asimov's Science Fiction Magazine*, a sequel to the first collection, *Why I Left Harry's All-Night Hamburgers*. The title story is not the best, but it does have the most captivating name. In "The Loch Moose Monster" by Janet Kagan, space settlers from Earth have inhabited a planet and rely on genetic scientists to reproduce as many authentic Earth-like life forms as possible, even mythical beasts. "The Water Bringer" by Mary Rosenblum tells of an ostracized boy who is befriended by a con man on a desperately desiccated Earth. In "Kites" by Maureen F. McHugh, futuristic athletes ride kites in high-stakes races. "Gerda and the Wizard" by Rob Chilson is a medieval feminist tale. In most of the stories, the sci-fi element is not strongly developed and is basically incidental to the plot and characters, but the inexact handling of the scientific components is a small criticism when compared to the strong styles, variety, and engrossing plots of nearly every story. KJ

WITTMANN, PATRICIA *Scrabble Creek*; illus. by Nancy Poydar. Macmillan, 1993 [32p]

ISBN 0-02-793225-7 \$14.95

Reviewed from galleys

R 5-8 yrs

The narrator here is the second youngest of five kids, but she's "one of the big kids now," which means that on the family's idyllic vacation at Scrabble Creek she sleeps in the bunkhouse with her brothers and sister, not in the trailer with Mom, Dad, and the baby. "I like everything at Scrabble Creek, except . . . the night," the girl says worriedly, as she hears spooky noises coming from the same forest where she had played so happily in the daytime. The family finally has a nocturnal noise-making contest that outstrips any murmurs in the bushes, and our protagonist settles down cheerfully for the night—unlike her now-nervous siblings. The fear-conquering is a slender although reassuring plot, but the real pleasure of this book is the slice-of-life on vacation, as the family plays in the water ("I swim underwater like an otter and look at everyone's toes") and enjoys summer cookout food. The watercolor art conveys both the verdant peace and the surrounding darkness of a big forest, and it contains enough birds and small mammals to make careful scrutiny worthwhile. It can be hard to tell the pictured people apart, but their depiction is imaginatively realistic, with weird flashlight maneuvers from the brothers, and Mom rarely getting a chance to sit down. This is a nicely woodsy version of a vacation youngsters will want while they empathize with the narrator's fear; the final picture will reassure them that the night scares "big kids" too, but everybody can still have fun. DS

YOUNG, ROBERT *Action Figures*; ISBN 0-87518-516-9; *Dolls*; ISBN 0-87518-517-7; *Teddy Bears*; ISBN 0-87518-520-7. Each book: Dillon, 1992 \$13.95 64p illus. with photographs (Collectibles) R Gr. 3-5

Each book in this series featuring toys that kids like to collect has just the right balance of current and historical facts about the collectibles. The author's style is simple and clear; for example, when he describes the growth in the popularity of dolls: "Children were not needed quite as much for work, and adults began to change their views of children." The books are amply illustrated by sharp photographs with good captions. However, it is sometimes frustrating for the reader when a toy is described in detail but not illustrated, like the Sir Koff-a-Lot teddy bear. A young reader who picks up one of these books because he or she is interested in the toy will find many more things of interest—history, potential careers in toy making, and information on how to collect toys. Each book is appended with an index, glossary, and list of addresses to contact for further information. KJ



CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARDS 1993

The Newbery Medal will be awarded to Cynthia Rylant for *Missing May* (Jackson/Orchard). The Newbery Honor Books are *Somewhere in the Darkness* by Walter Dean Myers (Scholastic), *What Hearts* by Bruce Brooks (Geringer/HarperCollins), and *The Dark-Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural* by Patricia C. McKissack, illustrated by Brian Pinkney (Knopf).

The Caldecott Medal will be awarded to Emily Arnold McCully for *Mirette on the High Wire* (Putnam). The Caldecott Honor Books are *The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, written by Jon Scieszka and illustrated by Lane Smith (Viking), *Seven Blind Mice* by Ed Young (Philomel), and *Working Cotton* by Sherley Anne Williams and illustrated by Carole Byard (Harcourt).

The Coretta Scott King Award will be presented to Patricia C. McKissack, author of *The Dark-Thirty: Southern Tales of the Supernatural* (Knopf) for writing and to Kathleen Atkins Wilson for *The Origin of Life on Earth: An African Creation Myth* (Sight Productions) for illustration. Honor Books for writing include Walter Dean Myers' *Somewhere in the Darkness* (Scholastic), Patricia and Fredrick McKissack's *Sojourner Truth: Ain't I a Woman* (Scholastic), and Mildred Pitts Walter's *Mississippi Challenge* (Bradbury). Honor Books for illustration are *Little Eight John*, written by Jan Wahl and illustrated by Wil Clay (Lodestar), *Sukey and the Mermaid*, written by Robert San Souci and illustrated by Brian Pinkney (Four Winds), and *Working Cotton*, written by Sherley Anne Williams and illustrated by Carole Byard (Harcourt).

The Scott O'Dell Award for historical fiction will be given to Michael Dorris for *Morning Girl* (Hyperion).

The Canadian Library Association's Best Book of the Year for Children is *Eating Between the Lines* by Kevin Major (Doubleday Canada). The Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award for illustration goes to Ron Lightburn for *Waiting for the Whales*, written by Sheryl McFarlane (Orca Books).

The Carnegie Medal was awarded to Berlie Doherty for *Dear Nobody* (Orchard).

The Kate Greenaway Medal was awarded to Janet and Allan Ahlberg for *The Jolly Christmas Postman* (Little, Brown).

The Margaret A. Edwards Award will be given to M. E. Kerr.

The 1993 May Hill Arbuthnot Lecture will be delivered by Margaret McElderry.

Much of the above information was graciously provided by the Children's Book Council, which offers a materials brochure listing their many helpful publications. To receive this, send a request, enclosing 6" x 9" SASE with 2 oz. first-class postage, to the Children's Book Council, 568 Broadway, Suite 404, New York, NY, 10012.

SUBJECT AND USE INDEX

Keyed to *The Bulletin's* alphabetical arrangement by author, this new index, which will appear in each issue, can be used in three ways. Entries in regular type refer to subjects; entries in **bold type** refer to curricular or other uses; entries in ALL-CAPS refer to genres and appeals. In no way meant to be a cataloging aid, this rather idiosyncratic index is instead intended to lead readers to those books that could fill a particular gap in a collection, to help teachers and librarians find books that might be useful in various school or recreational settings, and to help in those requests for a "love story" or a "scary story." In the case of subject headings, the subhead "stories" refers to books for the readaloud audience; "fiction," to those books intended for independent reading.

ADVENTURE STORIES: Mayne;
Morpurgo

African-Americans: Hamilton;
Haskins; Myers; Towle

African-Americans-fiction: Berry;
Chocolate; Hodge; Nelson;
Wilkinson

Africa-fiction: Dickinson

Africa-folklore: Gleeson

Anthropology: Dickinson

Arson-fiction: Smith

Art history: Sills

Art: Swentzell

Babysitting-fiction: McKenna

BEDTIME STORIES: Emberley

BIOGRAPHIES: Adler; McPherson;
Myers; Sills; Toll; Towle

Brothers and sisters-fiction: Weaver-
Gelzer

Bullies-fiction: Scribner

Cameroon-fiction: Weaver-Gelzer

Canals-stories: Doherty

Caribbean Islands-fiction: Berry;
Hodge

Civil Rights Movement: Myers

Civil War-fiction: Fleischman;
Rinaldi

CONCEPT BOOKS: Rockwell

COUNTING BOOKS: Brown

Cousins-fiction: Farmer; Willey

Cows-stories: Brown

Dogs: Manson

Dolls-fiction: King-Smith

Dragons-stories: Sutcliff

Drama: Fleischman

England-fiction: Farmer

Ethics and values: Browne; Silver

Everyday life stories: Greene

Evolution-fiction: Dickinson

Explorers: Manson

Family problems-fiction: Willey

FANTASY: Cooper; Jordan; King-
Smith; Sutcliff

Fathers and daughters-fiction:
Hodge

FOLKTALES AND FAIRYTALES:

Carey; Fox; Gleeson; Grimm

Food and eating: Jaspersohn

Food and eating-stories: Baumann;
Gleeson

Friends-fiction: Snyder

FUNNY STORIES: Blackman

Guys and lesbians-fiction: Salat

GEOGRAPHY: Leigh; Lerner

GHOST STORIES: Farmer

Government: Chocolate

Growing up-fiction: Mango;
McColley; Naylor; Willey

HISTORICAL FICTION: Fleisch-
man; Levitin; Mayne; Morpurgo;
Nelson; Rinaldi; Weaver-Gelzer

History, Canadian: Manson

History, U. S.: Hamilton; Haskins;
McPherson; Myers; Rinaldi

History, world: Maestro

Hobbies: Young

Holocaust: Adler; Toll

Horses: Johnson

Horses-stories: Doherty

Immigrants-fiction: Morpurgo

Inventing: Towle
 Italy-folklore: Fox
 Jews-fiction: Levitin
 Jews-stories: Peretz
Journalism: Calabro
 Kidnapping-fiction: Salat
 LOVE STORIES: Mango
 Manufacturing: Jaspersohn; Young
 Mexico-fiction: McColley
 Mice-poetry: Moore
 Money: Maestro
 Monsters-stories: Emberley
 Mormons-fiction: Little
 Mothers and daughters-fiction:
 Salat; Smith
 Native Americans: Swentzell
 Native Americans-poetry: Lyon
 New Zealand-fiction: Mayne
 Night-stories: Wittmann
 POETRY: Baumann; Lyon; Moore
 Prejudice-fiction: Hodge; Nelson;
 Salat; Silver
 Ranch life: Johnson
Reading aloud: Baumann; Bible;
 Fleischman; Fox; Manson;
 Sutcliff
Reading, easy: Blackman; Greene;
 McKenna; Moore
Reading, family: Bible; Emberley;
 Markle; Rockwell
Reading, reluctant: Chocolate;
 Little; Salat; Wilkinson

Religious education: Bible; Peretz
 Rural life-stories: Hershey
 SCHOOL STORIES: Chocolate;
 Scribner; Wilkinson
 SCIENCE FICTION: Williams
Science experiments: VanCleave
 SHORT STORIES: Berry; Silver;
 Williams
 Slavery: Hamilton; Haskins
Social issues: Calabro
 South Africa-fiction: Silver
Story hour: Brown; Carey; Doherty;
 Gleeson; Peretz; Rockwell
 Suicide-fiction: Naylor
 Summer vacation-fiction: Levitin;
 McKenna; Willey
 Summer vacation-stories: Wittmann
 Swaziland: Leigh
 Television: Calabro
 Toys: Young
 Transportation: Doherty
 Treasure hunting-fiction: Snyder
 Ukraine: Lerner
 Underground Railroad: Haskins
 Valentine's Day-fiction: Scribner
 War-fiction: Weaver-Gelzer
Weather: Markle
Women's studies: McPherson; Sills
 World War II: Adler; Toll
 Writing by children: Leigh
 Zoos-stories: Browne



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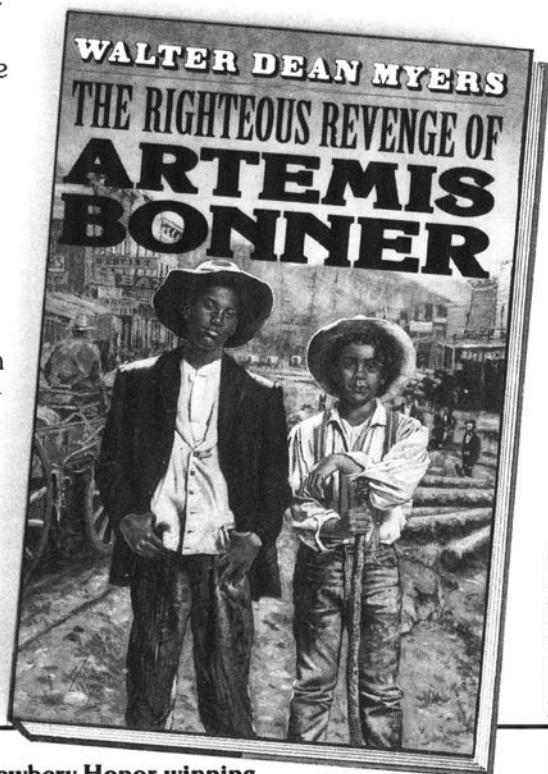
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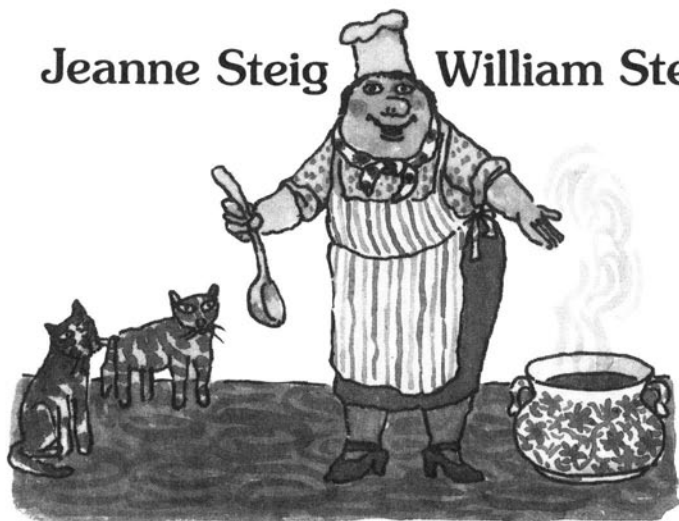
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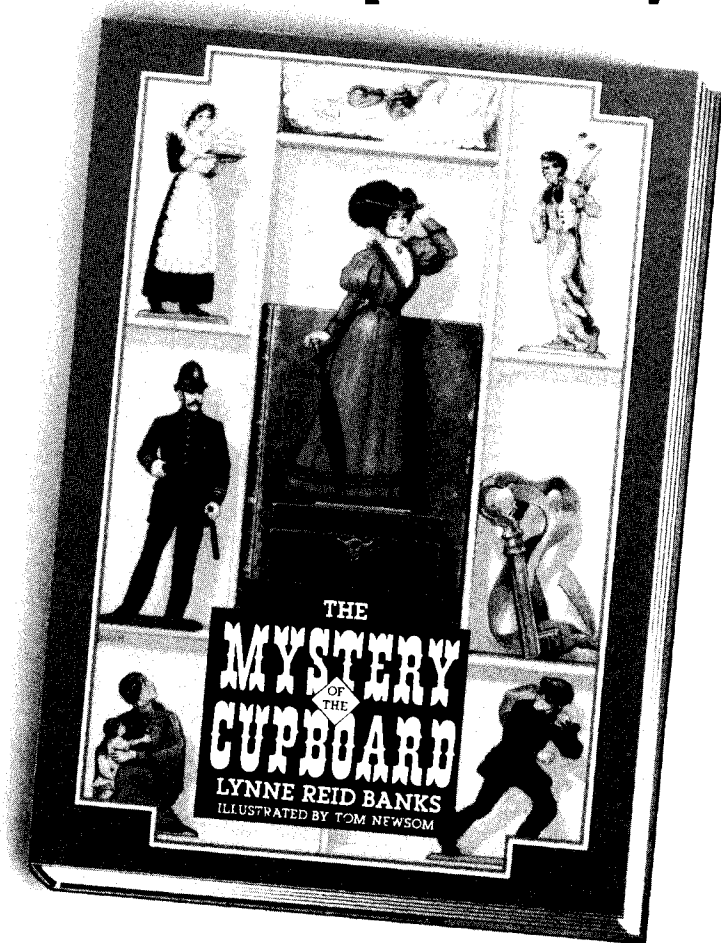
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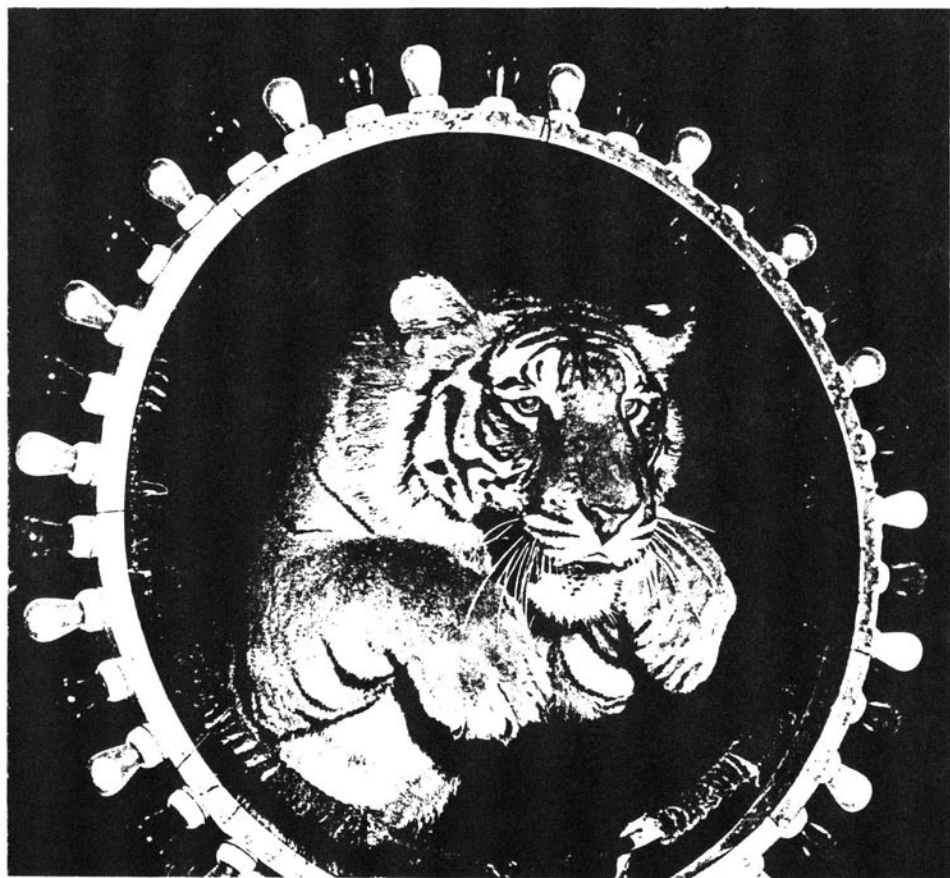


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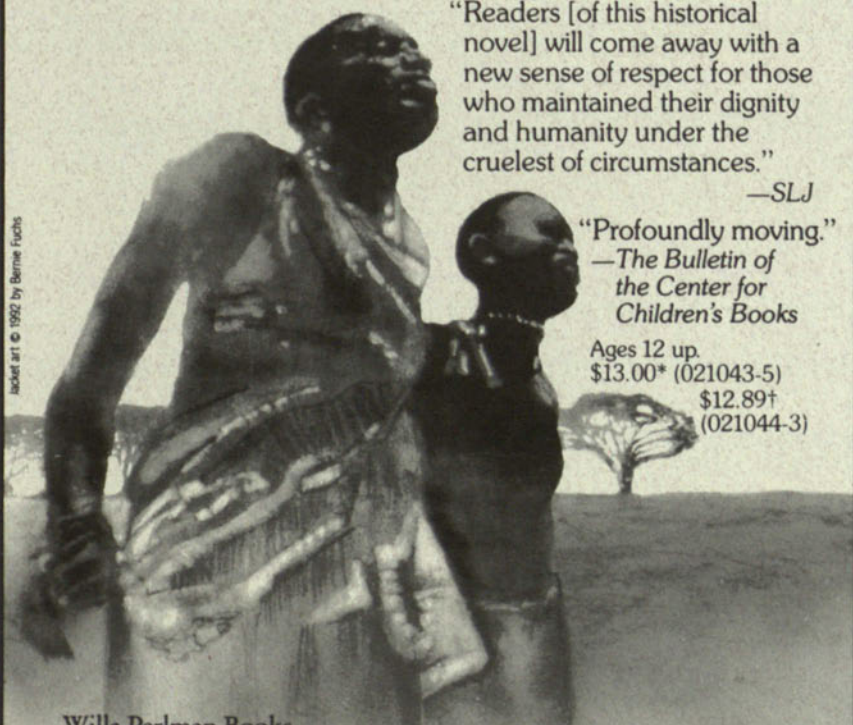
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